

Haddam Garden Club

June 2018 Garden Blog Article

by Cindy Tillson



Watering and Other June Garden Callings...

Hopefully Mother Nature will provide us with rain frequently enough to make watering a non-issue. However, almost all plants wilt in the heat of the afternoon sun when the temperature climbs. If you are tempted to water, the first thing to do is feel the soil beneath the mulch. If it is wet, don't water. Instead, go back outside and check on the wilted plants at dusk. If they have perked up, they were just drooping from the sun.

As good as it makes you feel to go out and give the poor plant a little drink, you are doing it more harm than good. That's right. All you are doing is wetting the surface of the soil. This encourages the roots to rise up to the surface to drink, where they are exposed to the heat of the sun and they dry out. It is an endless cycle encouraging shallow root systems. When they do need to be watered (usually once a week in normal soil with no rain) they need a DEEP SOAKING. An inch of water a week is the rule. I place the hose at the base of each plant and let it dribble until the well around the plant is filled and has soaked down. A drip irrigation system can be very efficient (and allow you to pull a few weeds or play with the kids), especially on a timer. This gradual deep watering will make the roots grow downward to find the water. Watering this way creates a sustainable landscape (that doesn't require all this coddling and watering by you). **If you must water from above, do so early enough in the day to allow the foliage to dry before nightfall to minimize the opportunity for fungus and diseases to develop.**

New plants do need some coddling at first. Trees need to be watered the whole first year and perhaps the second. You can get 20 gallon watering bags for trees that work very well (as does the hose and your watering can). Water shrubs weekly the first year and perennials weekly for probably a month unless it's really dry. Annuals and vegetables need food and water the whole growing season. Adding a 2" layer of mulch at the base of new plants helps keep more moisture in the soil, but leave it at least an inch from the stem. Just don't get caught up in this frequent shallow watering routine. It does the plants more harm than good and makes you feel overwhelmed by a garden that should be giving you pleasure. Container plants are the exception. They need water often, even daily sometimes.

PRUNE COMMON MILKWEED. It will grow back. Monarchs like it small, about 8" tall, juicy and tender. Check your trimmings for eggs. **WASH YOUR HANDS** after contact with the milky sap. Do not get the sap in your eyes. This will entail a trip to the local hospital.

GARLIC SCAPES. The garlic you planted in the fall is up now and developing these funky curly "scapes". As cute as these are, if it is big garlic bulbs you're

after **cut them off** when they have curled all the way around and are beginning to go up again. If you leave them, the plant's energy will go to flower and seed formation, not bulb enhancement. Monitor the patch until all the scapes are picked. The part closest to the flower end is the most tender. They can be roasted, grilled, sautéed, put in pesto, on pizza, pickled—use your imagination. They are also fun in cut flower arrangements.

PRUNE YOUR SPRING BLOOMING BUSHES such as lilacs, rhododendrons, weigelas, and forsythias. Nancy DeBrule Clemente of Natureworks has a free demonstration session in June on just how to go about this. See <https://naturework.com/garden-info/events/> for more information about this and many other informative classes.

If you wish to move or divide your **SPRING BLOOMING BULBS**, wait until the foliage has yellowed. Then carefully dig them up and let them dry in the shade for a few days. Store in a cool dry place until it's time to plant in the fall.

This is a good time to **TAKE CUTTINGS OF TREES AND SHRUBS**, such as chokeberry, butterfly bush, spirea, serviceberry, hydrangea, dogwood, and magnolia, to root for new plantings.

JUNE 18-24 IS POLLINATOR WEEK. I think we all know by now how valuable pollinators are and how their habitat is so tenuous. Minimally, plants would not grow, people and animals would not eat and our water and air would be deplorable without them. We all need to do our part to keep them safe and prolific. Pesticides will kill them. To read all about Pollinator Week, and what you can do, click here <http://www.pollinator.org/pollinatorweek/>

DON'T FORGET ABOUT A VINEYARD AFTERNOON on June 23. Go to the Haddam Garden Club's new website: haddamgardenclub.com to see if the event is sold out and if not, download the registration form. This promises to be a memorable educational, social and gastronomically pleasing event. Bring your friends!